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### **JOHN BROOKS HAMILTON 1893 to 1973<sup>1</sup>**

John Brooks was the youngest of the three sons of John Knox and Alice Julia Hamilton. He was known to all as **Jack**. He was born on 17 December 1893 at his father's hotel, the New Zealander, Manners Street Wellington.

Like his brothers he went to school at Wellington Boys College but we have not identified any public or family reports of his scholastic progress.

Jack did not enlist in World War 1 even though he was of an acceptable age, 21, in 1914. This was probably because his older brother Bill had enlisted and Jack was needed to provide and care for his widowed mother.

After the War, Jack went to Waipukurau with Bill and his mother when Bill bought his farm "Te Kowhai" at Hatuma. We believe this farm was taken up by Bill under a returned soldiers' grant scheme. Jack and Bill cleared the scrub from this land until Jack later bought his own farm "Mount View" at Argyll East, a little west of Otane, central Hawkes Bay.



**Jack with his mother Alice Julia**

Jack remained a bachelor for many years but after his mother died at Waipukurau in 1935 he married "Queenie" Potter. Queenie had been born Gertrude Margaret McInerney in about 1894

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Hamilton was a major contributor to this story and Mary Mulvaney also assisted.

so it is little wonder that she wanted to be known differently. Her parents were Thomas Joseph Francis McInerney and Delia Agnes O'Grady who married in 1892.

Queenie had previously married Les Potter in 1921. Les was born in Auckland on 13 September 1894, the son of John Potter and Mary Jane Forsyth of Avondale, Auckland who were married in 1889. Les graduated from Royal Military College, Duntroon, Australia in 1915 and enlisted in the New Zealand Army in 1916 with the rank of Lieutenant. He embarked for England on 19 August 1916 on the *Navua*, one of three transports carrying just over 2000 men as reinforcements for the war in Europe, arriving in England in October 1916.

Les was promoted to Captain on 15 March 1917 but was wounded in action, in France, in June 1917. Les remained in the Army after the WW1 and served as a Major in the Indian Division and later had a distinguished career during WW 2. He rose to the rank of Brigadier commanding the NZ forces in the Solomon Islands in 1943/44. He also commanded New Zealand's J Force in post-war Japan in 1946.

Les' military awards included Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE), Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and British War Medal (1914-1920). He died on 13 September 1964 at Tauranga at the age of 69. He is buried at Pyes Pa Anglican Cemetery, (Row 33 Section 27 plot 22).



Brigadier Les Potter, DSO

Queenie went to India with Les in 1926 and occasionally spoke of her old Indian (Army) days. We believe it was here that she developed her "*undying love*" (Ian Hamilton's words) of Bombay Sapphire and Tanqueray gin. After a few glasses she was the life of the party. She was a real entertainer, a trouper, who, with a piano and a glass, could hardly be stopped from singing. After her time in India she may have found life on a farm at Hawkes Bay very quiet but she continued to organize and take part in many theatrical musical shows at Napier, Hastings and Waipawa. For this, Queenie had unbounded enthusiasm and great talent.

Les Potter and Queenie had a daughter **Joan** who was later to marry Peter Collins, a farmer of Otane. It appears that Les tired of Queenie and was the sort of man who most likely had other alternatives. We have not been able to locate a divorce filing. Equally, we have not found a marriage record for Queenie and Jack although there are constraints on the release of marriage records less than 80 years old so if they were married after October 1931 the record would not be publicly available. Queenie always spoke of Jack as her “*Jackie Pie*”.

Little is recorded of Jack's interests outside the farm at “Mount View”, Argyll East. He joined a bowling club (Waipawa) and, with Queenie, was a regular attender at horse race meetings In Hawkes Bay and as far away as Trentham at Wellington. They both loved a little flutter on the ponies. Jack took great pride and care of his various motor cars – including Wolseleys, Rileys and large Austins. On the farm he had a pre-War Ford V8 pickup truck and later an early battle-grey, Ferguson tractor.

Jack never went anywhere without his beloved Australian terrier dog and, of course, his ever-present smelly tobacco pipe. The farm, only about 700 acres, was on rolling, elevated fertile limestone country and ideally suited mainly for fat lambs and wool. The farm in 2011 is now incorporated in the large neighbouring farm holding of the Butler family at Argyll East. Jack and Queenie had a small beach cottage at Haumoana near Hastings for many years and also, for a time, a larger seaside house at Westshore, Napier.

Queenie died in 1971 and she is buried in her parents' grave at Hastings Cemetery (Block N Grave 226). To quote Ian Rennie Hamilton: “*Jack must have acceded to her wishes to be interred in the McInerney plot with her parents. Although a lapsed Catholic, I now recall that a priest was called in when Queenie was in life's boarding lounge. So I presume she made up then and was given the RC Last Rites in due form before being handed her final boarding card. Bless her! She would have had plenty to then atone for.*”



**John Brooks (Jack) Hamilton & Gwen White**

**(Gavin's Mother in law)**

Following their retirement from "Mount View", Jack and Queenie lived in Frederick Street, Hastings. When Jack died in 1973 he left his residual estate, after some family legacies, to Joan Collins and a large bequest to Fantasyland, a childrens' playground area run by the Hastings City Council.

Jack died on 12 December 1973. He was cremated and the Hastings Cemetery records his name noting there is no headstone. Ian's view is:

*"My guess is that Uncle Jack had his ashes buried in the McInerney plot. The only person who could really verify that would have been Joan Collins (nee Potter), Queenie's daughter but Joan herself died at Taupo in 2010".*